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ABSTRACT

A guide for secondary school practitioners provides strategies for motivating limited-English-proficient (LEP) students to continue their education at least through the secondary level. The guide is based on the project handbook from a Kenwood, Oklahoma community-based dropout-prevention project. The guide begins by presenting dropout statistics, describing the characteristics of at-risk students, and listing common features of dropout prevention programs. The guide then outlines specific strategies for remedial instruction (including remedial content-area and language arts instruction), student self-development (including positive attitudes and motivation through career awareness), and establishing a home-school partnership. In each of these sections, specific objectives, procedures, materials, and activities are outlined. The suggestions are designed to enhance teacher awareness of the special needs of at-risk LEP students and to build a positive, success-oriented, and supportive school environment. (MSE)

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KEEPING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS IN SCHOOL: STRATEGIES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

From a curriculum guide prepared by
Kenwood OK School District

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many of the program objectives and services outlined in this Program Information Guide were featured in the former Title VII demonstration project, Parents for Action on Dropouts (PAD). This program was funded in 1982 for 3 years. Strategies from the project guideline book, *Parents Against Dropouts: A Guide for Establishing a Community Based Dropout Prevention Program for Rural Elementary Schools*, are incorporated here.

Eighty-four percent of the students in the Kenwood School District, located in Delaware County, Oklahoma, had been identified as limited English proficient. The majority of students came from homes where parents were Cherokee language dominant with limited English language skills and minimal education.

The PAD program targeted students in the seventh through tenth grades. Major program goals and objectives throughout the project included:

- improved English language proficiency,
- improved self-concept,
- improved parental involvement, and
- improved academic achievement and lower dropout rate.

Program evaluation findings showed that these goals were met (Bemis and Doty 1985).

INTRODUCTION

The term "student dropout" is generally defined by most superintendents as "a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school" (OERI 1987). The alarming rate of student dropout from high school programs, especially among language minority students, has moved government agencies, community organizations, and educational institutions to analyze the causes of this problem, identify effective prevention strategies, and implement innovative programs. These prevention strategies are as diverse as the causes of student dropout and employ a wide range of services.

The primary goal of this NCBE Program Information Guide is to provide practitioners with strategies that motivate and help limited English proficient (LEP) students to continue their education at least through high school. Topics covered include remedial language and content area instruction, career awareness, self-development activities and guidelines, and parental involvement strategies.

DROPOUT STATISTICS

According to a 1986 survey, 682,000 American teenagers dropped out during the 1985-86 school year, an average of 3,789 dropouts a day over 180 school days (OERI 1987).

A U.S. General Accounting Office Report, *School Dropouts: The Extent and Nature of the Problem* (1986) pointed out that the overall dropout rate for students ages 16 to 24 has remained between 13 to 14 percent for the last 10 years. However, the dropout rate is higher among Hispanics, blacks, and economically and educationally disadvantaged youth; up to 50 percent of students in some inner city schools drop out.

A longitudinal survey conducted by the Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Education, showed that of a random sampling of students, nearly 30 percent of the American Indian students and 20 percent of the Hispanic students who were sophomores in 1980 had dropped out by 1982 (OERI 1987).

CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

In light of such statistics, much attention is being focused on defining characteristics of students at high risk of dropping out. Some student characteristics commonly cited in the literature on the dropout problem are:

- chronic truancy,
- poor academic performance,
- misbehavior,
- high absenteeism,
- limited English proficiency,
- lack of motivation, and
- low self-esteem.

Other factors, not necessarily identifiable in a school setting, are family problems, economic background, and medical considerations.

COMMON FEATURES OF DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Most school dropout programs are targeted at poor and minority teenagers who have multiple problems and they provide multiple services: basic education, counseling, and social service assistance.

The objectives of a typical dropout program were described in a GAO report, *School Dropouts: Survey of Local Programs* (1987). Improving students' academic performance and their attitudes toward school were the goals cited by most program administrators. More specifically, the survey indicated that:

- over 90 percent of the programs provide basic education and personal counseling,
- about 75 percent encourage parental involvement,
- about 70 percent assist in job searches,
- about 70 percent assist in obtaining social services such as health care,
- about 50 percent prepare for a GED high school equivalency certificate, and
- over 20 percent offer day care services.

The success of dropout prevention programs depends not just on the types of services suggested above, but also upon a caring, committed staff; a stable learning environment; individualized instruction; and school hours and support services that respond to the students' needs.

STRATEGIES FOR REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

While dropping out of school is usually the result of several factors, a major cause is low academic achievement. For the language minority student, the problem of low academic achievement may be the result of a low level of English language proficiency. If a student has been identified as being at risk of dropping out due to consistently low grades and poor performance in content areas, remedial English assistance can be a preliminary prevention measure to improve academic performance. The process of identifying low-achieving LEP students for remedial assistance should take place as early as possible in a student's education, before they enter high school, when at-risk students are most likely to drop out. This guide targets grades 7 through 10, the critical transitional stage.

Although the delivery of remedial services for LEP students in schools may vary according to student numbers, district policies, or available resources, various remedial strategies may be adapted for use in a variety of settings -- the remedial, bilingual, ESL, or mainstream classroom.

Generally, a teacher should expose students to on-level learning experiences, assign activities designed for the students to achieve scholastic

success and gain confidence in their abilities, and develop a learning atmosphere of success and acceptance. In this section, goals, methods, and specific activities are provided for remedial instruction in the content areas and also for remedial language arts.

REMEDIAL CONTENT-AREA INSTRUCTION

Goal 1

Students will develop and improve academic achievement in content areas through increased proficiency in reading comprehension.

Methods

- Provide increased class time for silent reading.
- Provide increased class time for oral reading.
- Provide increased class time for library research and study on topics discussed in content area classes.

Goal 2

Students will develop and improve academic achievement through increased proficiency in aural comprehension.

Methods

- Have students make oral presentations on topics discussed in content area classes.
- Check for students' comprehension by having them repeat or rephrase material presented orally.
- Modify speech by speaking slowly, repeating and rephrasing often.

Goal 3

Students will develop and improve academic achievement through increased proficiency in oral communication.

Methods

- Allow students class time to make weekly presentations on current events. Sources for the topics include newspapers, magazines, and television news programs.

- Provide increased class time for small group discussions on relevant topics.

Sample Lesson for Social Studies

Objective

Students will develop English language skills and learn about selected Latin American countries by investigating the history, culture, and various features of these countries.

Procedures

The remedial and linguistic goals of this lesson require special consideration. Teachers may want to begin with a preliminary language lesson focusing on specialized vocabulary and sentence structures to increase the students' language skills and also facilitate their acquisition of the content area knowledge. Implementation of the content area lesson should make use of hands-on activities, visual aids, and extra-linguistic cues. Teachers should modify their speech by speaking more slowly, repeating and rephrasing, and limiting vocabulary and sentence length. Teachers should also verify students' comprehension by having them paraphrase concepts or information frequently throughout the lesson. Tutorial assistance by other students, the teacher, or teacher aides can help reinforce newly acquired skills and information.

Materials

Select a content area text corresponding to the students' reading level and a map of Latin America without country names.

Activities

- Present a list of relevant geographical or political terms that appear in the unit of study. Discuss or demonstrate the meaning of each word. Present useful sentence structures or formulas for discussing vocabulary, for example, "The capital of _____ is _____." Incorporate the vocabulary and formulas into a language lesson using various drills (meaningful as well as mechanical), listening discrimination exercises, and writing exercises including cloze tests, free composition, or dictation.

- Give the students the maps and have them fill in the appropriate country names and capitals. Assign different countries to students individually or in groups.

- Have students investigate their assigned countries by responding to written questions on important historical events, language, culture, or geographical characteristics.

- Have students give presentations of their findings using visuals or props. Have a question and answer period at the end of each presentation.

- Assign written activities based on information contained in oral presentations.

Evaluation

Meet with students individually or in groups to provide comments on presentations, focusing on the clarity of the presentation and the student's level of effort. Teachers may want to grade only the follow-up written exercises after students have reviewed the information. Also, teachers may want to permit students to select a particular skill or unit of information to be assessed for a grade.

REMEDIAL LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION

Goal 1

Identify students at risk of dropping out because of limited English proficiency.

Methods

- Administer appropriate tests to determine the students' level of language proficiency.

- Consult with counselors and other teachers and staff members to validate the assessment.

Goal 2

Develop English language proficiency through increased student confidence and improve reading ability.

Methods

- Provide high interest reading materials appropriate for social/age groups.

- Allow students to read aloud from materials written at their reading level.

- Allow students to hear and read aloud materials that are two or three levels higher than their reading levels.

Goal 3

Develop English language proficiency through increased student confidence and improved writing skills.

Methods

- Allow students to write free composition that will not be graded.
- Provide increased class time for group writing activities.
- Evaluate student performance only on previously practiced skills.

Sample Lesson 1 for Language Arts

Objective

Students will develop selected grammar and composition skills such as punctuation, capitalization, sentence tructure, and paragraph formation.

Procedures

Explain that the students' writing samples will not be graded initially, but evaluated according to skills that they personally targeted for improvement. Skills from which students may select are to be listed by the teacher in the front of each student's personal notebook. These should correspond to objectives of the regular language arts program.

Materials

Students should have notebooks reserved exclusively for this activity.

Activities

- Have students personalize their writing notebooks. A personal quote, thought, or belief may be used as a dedication. Students can also be encouraged to decorate their notebooks.
- Have students make an initial entry into their notebooks.
- Meet with students individually and discuss the entry for content only. At this time, have students select three skills from the list for future writing exercises.

- Have students write other entries practicing the skills they have selected. This should be done regularly throughout the unit of study.

- Meet with students at regular intervals to evaluate entries. Have each student select one entry to be graded.

Evaluation

Meet with students to discuss their entries selected for grading.

Related Activities

- Students may read aloud to the class from their notebooks for practice in oral language skills and reading.

- Students may select their favorite entries to create a book to be handbound. This book can be presented as a gift to parents.

Sample Lesson 2 for Language Arts

Objective

Students will develop skills in composing paragraphs through a group writing exercise.

Procedures

All students in the class will participate in composing a group story. The teacher will obtain suggestions from all students in turn and display all contributions on posterboard. (Posterboard is preferable to the blackboard so the story can be saved for future use in related activities). Topics can be as abstract or as concrete as is appropriate for students' age or skills level. For some classes, using actual objects or pictures of interest may help generate discussion. The teacher should provide lead questions.

Materials

Use magic markers and posterboard.

Activities

- Decide the story topic or offer suggestions and allow the students to choose.

- Have students think about the topic and make notes about their ideas. (Provide extra time for this step and assist students individually as needed.)

- Students will read their suggestions aloud in turn and the teacher will place sentences on posterboard.

In conclusion, the goals, methods, and activities of remedial instruction in both content area and language arts can be more effectively met as part of an instructional program that integrates the following instructional practices:

- Create small student groups to facilitate individualized instruction and group management. Low achieving students are generally less self-conscious in small groups and more likely to participate in group discussions and activities. For more information on cooperative learning strategies, consult the NCBE Program Information Guide, *Co-operative Learning: Integrating Language and Content-Area Instruction* (1987).

- Make these groups heterogeneous by language and cultural background and academic and language proficiency to allow for more varied and stimulating student interaction.

- Encourage student input in selecting different activities and demonstrations related to a unit of study to increase the motivation.

- Incorporate a native language instructional component as needed for improving English language skills. In the absence of a bilingual teacher, a bilingual aide, parent volunteer, or peer-tutor can be used.

STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SELF-DEVELOPMENT

By the time students have been identified as being at risk of dropping out because of academic problems, many will have spent years in school without experiencing successful or positive learning situations. As a result, these students may display low self-esteem, apathy, and negative attitudes toward school, the mainstream culture, and themselves. Together, these factors reduce the students' motivation to remain in school.

Students' motivation to remain in school can be increased by addressing the problem of negative attitudes. Teachers can help students to learn to cope with their social adjustment problems, develop better self-concepts, and understand that many adolescents experience some kind of identity crisis. By discovering how to articulate their feelings to other people, students should be better prepared to cope with the problems they will face in the future.

In addition, students' motivation to remain in school can be enhanced by helping them to realize the importance of an education in leading economically and personally rewarding adult lives. Teachers can encourage at-risk students

to understand this by developing their career awareness and providing them with employment information. Students can start to think about their future, become responsible for self-evaluation and career exploration, and expand or clarify their tentative career choices and goals.

POSITIVE STUDENT ATTITUDES

Goal 1

Students will identify and analyze some of their feelings and emotions. By sharing their feelings and thoughts based on personal experiences, students will find that it is normal for teenagers to have strong, fluctuating emotions.

Methods

- During a private conference, allow students to discuss problems encountered at home or in school.
- Have students share personal experiences and discuss their emotional reactions to a variety of situations in a group discussion.

Goal 2

Students will communicate their opinions and viewpoints. They will discover that it is appropriate to express their opinions to other people, especially to peers and authority figures, as long as their conflicting viewpoints or opinions are not intended to hurt or insult others.

Methods

- Allow students to discuss difficult or controversial topics such as death, sex, or drug abuse. Acknowledge differences in cultural attitudes toward these topics.
- Encourage students to formulate personal viewpoints on these topics.
- Discuss appropriate ways to express personal viewpoints.

Goal 3

Students will develop awareness and appreciation of differences between their home and mainstream cultures. Students should realize that a change in behavior patterns does not necessarily require giving up their own cultural heritage, moral values, or religious beliefs. By hearing how other students were raised, language minority students can increase their awareness of cultural differences.

Methods

- Discuss appropriate behavior in social contexts for both a variety of native cultures and the mainstream culture.
- Discuss difficulties of adapting to a new culture while maintaining home cultural values.
- Encourage students to participate in native culture activities.

Sample Lesson 1 for Student Self-Development

Objectives

Students will examine important aspects of their lives, explore their feelings, and have an opportunity to express opinions.

Procedures

The following activities are based on a personal inventory questionnaire designed to help students focus on themselves. The format of the questionnaire may vary as appropriate for the age and grade of the students. The questions are subjective; answers are not right or wrong and cannot be graded. Categories may include the students' personal abilities, likes or dislikes, important relationships, and personal characteristics. The questionnaire may be drafted by the teacher in consultation with the school guidance counselor or psychologist.

A sample composed of ten open-ended items follows. Items may address the students directly or propose hypothetical situations.

1. Identify three or four situations involving your parents that have made you very happy.
2. Identify three or four situations involving your parents that have made you angry or unhappy.
3. Name three of your characteristics that you feel make your friends, family, teachers like you.
4. Name three of your characteristics that you are proud of.
5. Name three characteristics about yourself that you would like to change.
6. What are three or four things you have learned from your friends that make you feel proud?

7. Joe is in the eighth grade. He is 13 years old. One of his friends wants him to play video games at the local mall instead of going to school that day. What should Joe tell his friend?

8. Mary is in the eighth grade. She is 14 years old. She has met a group of students that would like her to be their friend. These students use drugs. What should Mary do?

9. John is 14 years old. He is in the ninth grade. His father no longer lives at home and the family doesn't have as much money as they did before. How can John help his family?

10. Two new students have joined your ninth grade class. Although they are both 14 years old, in their countries they didn't go to school. Now that they are in the United States, what are some things you would like them to know about school here?

Activities

- Students should be given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. Compile a list of answers most frequently given for each of the questions.

- In the next session, ask the students to discuss these answers. Stress that it is not necessary for the students to reach any conclusions about what is normal or average and that their personal opinions can be expressed in a non-accusatory, reasonable manner.

Sample Lesson 2 for Student Self-Development

Objective

Students will experience the relativity of their perceptions by observing and understanding ordinary events through different perspectives and new viewpoints.

Procedures

To begin the process, have students focus on actual objects. Ordinary household or classroom objects may be used. This will familiarize the students with the procedures to be used later when focusing on more abstract situations or depictions of various events.

Activities

- Have students form small groups to take turns focusing on a commonly used object.

- Allow students to compile a list of descriptions, impressions, or interpretations about the use or appearance of the object.

- Repeat the first two steps using a picture of students interacting with each other or authority figures (teachers, parents, etc.) in various settings or situations.

- Allow students to formulate their own interpretation about the situation or event being depicted. Encourage students to express their personal opinions.

MOTIVATION THROUGH CAREER AWARENESS

Goal 1

Students will become aware of the importance of education and training by exploring many occupations and the knowledge and skills they require.

Methods

- Supply students with literature and information regarding a variety of occupations and their education and training requirements.

- Provide students with experiential activities leading to related career choices.

- Discuss the relationship of occupational requirements to education and training.

Goal 2

Students will become aware of the need for education and training through the development of various pre-employment skills.

Methods

- Inform students about legal restrictions on the types of jobs minors may hold, and the number of hours per week they may work.

- Provide students with the opportunity to complete work-related forms such as job applications, work permits, and income tax forms.

- Allow students to engage in actual job-seeking activities that include identifying listings of job openings, reading advertisements, and understanding qualifications.

- Discuss attributes of a successful employee, including communication skills and work habits.

Sample Lesson 1 for Career Awareness

Objective

Students will become familiar with a variety of careers and occupations and become aware of requisite education or training for various jobs.

Procedures

The following activities should be integrated into an ongoing unit of study to last several weeks. As a step in preparing for the activities, teachers should compile information regarding career areas or occupations in the form of brochures, actual job descriptions, or published materials. Occupational series can be obtained from various school or local libraries, local industry personnel offices, or public and private job agencies. As many materials as possible should be collected to distribute to students or display in an occupational awareness or learning center set up in the classroom.

Materials

Select occupational brochures and literature geared to the language level or age group of the students.

Activities

- Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Assign each group a different occupational category to investigate. Provide the students with literature on their assigned categories.

- Provide students with worksheets containing questions to guide them through their investigation. Questions should focus on specific job-related tasks, required training or education, necessary equipment or materials, and income potential. Some sample questions are:

  1. Identify various tools or necessary equipment used in this occupation.

  2. How must you prepare to be able to do this job (high school diploma, college, special training)?

  3. Are there any special abilities or talents you must have?

  4. How much experience do you need?

5. Describe a typical day on the job.

6. What are the occupations of the people you must work with?

7. How much money can you earn in this occupation?

8. Will you continue to do this job for many years or will you change to another occupation?

9. How would you go about finding openings in your occupation?

10. Are there special areas of the country where most people who do this job live (country, city, near bodies of water, etc.)?

Provide assistance to each group in organizing their responses.

- Students may design visuals, perform skits, or prepare other group participation activities to demonstrate work-related tasks (e.g., data entry, bank transactions, light carpentry).

Evaluation

Administer a test based on specific career areas and occupations covered in student presentations. Inform students in advance of the information on which they will be evaluated. Emphasize practical and useful information about the occupations discussed, such as necessary skills, schooling and training, and sources of information about job opportunities.

Related Activities

- Arrange field trips to local industries, businesses, or organizations.

- Show filmstrips describing various occupations. (Local libraries are a good source for these.)

- Introduce students to sources of information on job openings such as classified advertisements. This might be a successful language arts activity.

- Have students fill out mock job applications.

Sample Lesson 2 for Career Awareness

Objective

Students will explore their vocational interests and aptitudes through self-assessment exercises.

Procedures

The following activities can be integrated as part of a language development exercise. Stress that individuals who are able to assess and express their talents, interests, and values can make the best career decisions. Emphasize that these things are apt to change and that any career choice is tentative. This activity would be more meaningful to students after completion of a career awareness activity such as Sample Lesson 1.

Materials

Create a chart of major career areas or occupations. These should be presented with brief description of work-related tasks, educational or training requirements.

Activities

- Have students make separate lists of words or phrases that they feel describe their talents, interests/hobbies and aspirations. A completed exercise might resemble the following:

Talents	*Interests/Hobbies*	*Aspirations*
-Earn high math scores	-Read books	-Learn several languages
-Sketch	-Collect stamps	-Earn alot of money
-Read quickly	-Play soccer	-Make others happy
-Play guitar	-Watch movies	
-Cook well	-Contribute to society	
-Run very well	-Visit distant countries	

- Allow students to match three or four career choices from the chart to each list.

- Have students compare the choices for each list and find the ones that appeared in all three.

- Allow students to share two of their career choices with the class and explain briefly reasons for their choices.

STRATEGIES FOR A HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Family circumstances such as economic need, sociocultural adjustment difficulties, and low educational attainment by parents and siblings may cause or exacerbate students' academic or social problems. For example, absenteeism

may be caused by students' need to work nights, weekends, and even during school hours to help support their families. It may also result from a lack of parental encouragement to attend school regularly.

Measures taken by school administrators to integrate the home and school environments can help close the gaps between mainstream and native cultural values and expectations of students' behaviors. Also, they may provide an opportunity for parents to become involved as active participants in their childrens' education, providing needed additional assistance.

Effective home-school partnership programs may require expertise that teachers lack. Schools, therefore, may need to provide staff training to implement parent participation programs or hire new staff experienced in such programs.

A dropout prevention program that successfully integrates home and school should:

- Develop and initiate a plan of activities which will directly involve parents in the educational needs of their children. By becoming involved, the parents can demonstrate support for the goals, objectives and activities of dropout prevention efforts.

- Provide support services and counseling to students who fail to attend classes regularly, demonstrate social adjustment problems, and lack adequate transportation to-and-from school in order to participate fully in regular classroom activities.

- Organize a remedial tutoring program during and after school hours for students who are identified as having significant difficulties in performing or completing their classroom work or homework assignments satisfactorily, especially in English, reading, writing and comprehension skills.

- Develop and conduct classes for parents to teach them techniques for helping their children with academic and social problems at school and to become more supportive and understanding of the cultural, personal, emotional and self-identity problems their children face.

Goal 1

Promote positive school/parent communications. By opening channels of communication among students, parents, and school personnel, major problem areas may be identified, and short-term and long-term solutions may be implemented.

Activities

- Conduct parent surveys to determine their needs and interests.
- Hold regular staff meetings to discuss parental needs and concerns.
- Conduct information workshops for parents on high school dropouts using films, national research, and statistics from local and feeder schools.
- Schedule parent orientation sessions at the beginning of each year.
- Offer bimonthly social events for parents and students.
- Hold regular student/parent/teacher conferences, especially for students who have emotional or social problems or who are chronically absent or truant.

Goal 2

Raise the parents' educational level through adult education classes. Often, parents' low educational attainment will inhibit involvement in the the children schooling.

Activities

- Identify skill areas of greatest need.
- Set up ABE (or GED) classes in adult literacy and other indicated areas of need.
- Provide worksheets for practice at home.
- Offer tutorial assistance.
- Provide class time for parents to participate in instructional activities with students.

Goal 3

Provide opportunities for parents to improve their parenting skills. Parents can become more supportive of their childrens' emotional, social, and educational needs.

Activities

Provide workshops on parenting skills, such as the following:

1. Family Stress: Invite parents, children, and relatives to a workshop that focuses on communication in the family. Encourage members of the family to be honest and loyal to each other in spite of adverse conditions. Emphasize open communications as a means of reducing stress through understanding.

2. Child Abuse: Make parents aware of the consequences of child abuse on the child, the family, and the individual committing the abuse. Explain the types of child abuse, how to recognize symptoms, and how to report it. Discuss how parents can become abusive because of their own problems, such as alcoholism, financial and marital problems, or work stress. Provide strategies for controlling tempers and coping with stress.

3. Emergency Life Saving Techniques Used in CPR: Demonstrate and practice basic techniques, under the guidance of a certified CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) instructor, that can save the life of someone choking, drowning, or having a heart attack.

CONCLUSION

Language minority students, like their mainstream counterparts, are subject to influences on their academic performance that can result in their dropping out. The broad range of needs represented by LEP students has inspired diverse programs and services. A pregnant 10th grader and a habitually absent 7th grader require different types of assistance both at school and at home. Dropout prevention programs must vary in the technical aspects of their service delivery.

This Guide has addressed some of the influences and needs of at-risk LEP students by focusing on the issues of language proficiency, academic achievement, and home-school integration. It has addressed at-risk adolescents by focusing on the issues of student self-awareness, attitudes, and motivation. The suggestions presented should enhance teachers' awareness of the special needs of at-risk LEP students in order to build a positive, success-oriented, and supportive school environment beneficial to all students.

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